THE RAGTIMER

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DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

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To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

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Just when we thought our communications problems were coming to an end, we faced a new problem: a postal strike that brought all Canadian mail to a halt, including ours.

The main message we'd like to transmit is that Bill McCrostie has once again organized an extraordinary Ragtime Bash. Mark down the dates on your calendar -- October 16 (Friday evening) and October 17 (Saturday).

You will be receiving more information shortly about the Bash, but it's not too early to make your reservations with the Cara Inn.

The most welcome news in this issue is that Eubie Blake is still in good health after breaking his right hip in early March. We have a special report on that accident because of the concern of many ragtimers who have had to rely upon extremely brief news items to learn what happened.

We've already heard some ideas on how to commemorate our 20th anniversary in 1982, but we'd like to hear from you. Why not sit down with pen and paper -- today.

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EUBIE

An exclusive report on the accident that had us all worried

By Jack Hutton

How many of us could create world-wide headlines through the simple act of turning the wrong way while asleep and falling out of bed? That's exactly what happened to Eubie Blake one Friday night in early March. And for many days the simple accident had Eubie's many friends around the world wondering what effect it would have on someone who had just passed his 98th birthday.

Doctors at Long Island College Hospital diagnosed a fracture of the right hip after taking X-rays. That news, once it appeared on international news wires, led to more questions. Would Eubie Blake be permanently bed-ridden? Had we seen the last of him on TV interview shows? Would his public playing career be affected?

This is a special Ragtimer report to tell you that the legend from Baltimore has once again astounded the outside world and delighted his countless ragtime fans. Consider the following facts.

. On the Monday following his fall, Eubie underwent a three-hour operation which placed four pins in his right hip. (That is an extremely abbreviated explanation of the complicated medical terms, but this is an international ragtime publication, not a medical journal)

. Within days of his operation, Eubie was up and walking around the hospital corridors in a "walker", cheerfully greeting other patients who recognized him.

. While being pushed in a wheelchair through a corridor by a nurse, Eubie saw a piano and tried a few keys. "You know," he told the nurse, "I've rarely been known to pass one of these by."

. Hospital officials reacted quickly. An upright piano was moved into the therapy room of the hospital. For the remainder of his stay at Long Island College Hospital, Eubie entertained other patients with endless patience and good humour.

. On Thursday, March 26, his final day in hospital, Eubie played a concert for other patients, the staff and what appeared to be a full turn-out of the New York press corps. Every television station was on hand to learn whether the accident had had any effect on Eubie's playing or his famous wit.

By coincidence, I was sitting in a New York State motel room just north of New York City that evening. My son, John, burst into the room. "Quick. Dad, turn on the television." (Our family was on our way down for the New York trip that produced the Dick Hyman interview in this Ragtimer issue)

I flicked on the set. On camera, Eubie was waiting patiently for a TV interviewer to ask the inevitable questions about what if felt like to have a major operation at 98.

The interview began with the oldest question in a reporter's repertoire. "At your age, what is your formula or your recipe for reaching your advanced age?"

The glint in Eubie's eye should have been a give-away that he was going to have some fun answering that question. "Well, I've got to be honest and say that I've never really abused alcoholic drinks. I'm not patting myself on the back, but I never have."

"Then I would guess, sir, that the same thing applies to smoking?"

Eubie drew himself upright in the wheelchair and fixed his double-take stare upon the interviewer. "Smoke them? Man--I EAT THEM!" The entire audience broke into laughter. As the TV camera panned around the room, none were laughing with more affection than the white-coated medical staff.

Eubie wasn't about to let the interviewer off the hook." Of course, it really comes down to diet. You know that we don't eat the same as you folks. We can't afford to. Tell me (again, he fixed a questioning stare on his interviewer), do you eat chitlins?"

The TV reporter gulped at the thought of eating cooked intestines and shook his head.

"Well then, man, that's why I'm 98 and you ain't," said Eubie as the audience once again broke up at his wit.

Muriel Daniels, the hospital's director of community relations, recalled Eubie's hospital stay for the Ragtimer with affection. "Of course, we know Eubie Blake very well here. This is where he comes for all his check-ups, so everyone on staff feels that Eubie is part of our family."

"When friends drove him to the hospital that evening, I think he was more embarrassed than anything else at the thought that a fluke accident would be causing other people bother. As usual, he was more worried about other people's feelings than himself. That's Eubie Blake.

"As soon as news reports told the world that Eubie Blake was at our hospital, we had queries from just about every newspaper, every TV station and every radio station in this part of the state--and from elsewhere. There was so much interest, so much concern, that we had to eventually issue a press release to reassure everyone.

"It's impossible to describe his relationship with other patients. Just seeing or speaking to him makes them feel good. As soon as he was able to be out of bed, we placed the upright piano in the therapy room so that he could use it. He would go in each day and concentrate upon making the other patients feel good, making sure that their morale was up. You never heard him talking about himself."

The TV interview was over and I flicked off the set. My son looked at me thoughtfully. "Eubie Blake--he must be rather special. Is he?"

"You can say that again, John. Yes indeed, you can say that again."

DICK HYMAN

By Jack Hutton

Dick Hyman is playing a rich mixture of ragtime and stride piano on television. You watch that controlled energy, the lean, intense figure leaning ever so slightly backwards while the fingers handle lightning passages with iron control, and one word leaps into your mind — **awesome**. His expression rarely changes: total concentration except for an occasional flash of humour over a musical pun that escapes most of his audience, or satisfaction with a phrase. Twenty-five minutes later you realize you have just heard one of the few artists living today who could convince you that you had just listened to Scott Joplin, Rube Bloom, Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson in quick succession.

If that sounds incredible, consider another fact.

Richard Roven Hyman, born March 8, 1927, in New York City, began his full-time musical career after college in an era that was several light years removed from ragtime. He began as one of New York's busiest bebop pianists, playing behind Charlie (Bird) Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and others who had nothing to do with the world of Scott Joplin and Joseph Lamb.

It's a fact: a bebop pianist of the 1940's is today re-creating ragtime, stride and early jazz in a way that is eerily authentic. How come? How did it happen?

Before attempting to answer that, let me introduce Dick Hyman to you with a story of how he came to the aid of a Ragtime Society member. I was that ragtimer.

Some time in mid-1980, I acquired an album of James P. Johnson's music (Columbia, M33706, Charleston) in which Hyman played his own version of Johnson's Caprice Rag. I was both thrilled and intimidated by Hyman's bridge into the final theme of the 1914 rag. His hands literally explode in two different directions, miraculously recapturing the tempo two bars later. Every time I replayed the record — which I did countless times — I had the mental image of a bobsledder flashing around impossible corners. Night after night I tried figuring out just how Hyman did it, but time after time I "wiped out" before completing the bobsled course.

Then one night I met Ruby Braff, the brash and talented cornetist who has played and recorded

with Hyman. I remarked sadly that I would probably pass on some day without ever knowing how Hyman manoeuvered those few bars. Braff was characteristically blunt: "Why don't you drop him a line?" The audacity of the thought overwhelmed me, but two days later, fortified with a drink of Old Stepfather at my elbow, I wrote to Dick Hyman in Manhattan. My letter inquired about some of his records and mentioned Caprice Rag only as a shy footnote — so low-key, I thought, that he would probably not even notice it. Two days before Christmas a large brown envelope came through my front door in Toronto. In it was a friendly note from Hyman, discussing our mutual interest in Fats Waller. There was also a handwritten manuscript with the Caprice Rag solo written out note-for-note. My family will forever remember Christmas of 1980 as the year that I lived at the basement piano with the Christmas miracle.

That anecdote may explain my elated feelings weeks later when I pushed the buzzer on the ground floor of an aged building on Manhattan's 57th Street West, a stone's throw from Carnegie Hall, and spoke to Hyman in his studio three floors above. I had arranged the interview to coincide with a trip which my wife and family mistakenly thought was intended to see theatre and to shop. I was there as a 48-year-old groupie looking forward to meeting an idol.

Hyman was exactly as I'd pictured him from his records: scholarly, lean, intense, with an attentive manner that gave the impression he was thinking two steps ahead of you at all times. As I arrived, he put aside his rush job of orchestrating Noel Coward music for a new Broadway show and offered me some raisins. Energy food. I made a mental note.

We got right to the irony of a former bebop pianist recording the entire piano compositions of Scott Joplin (one of only two who have done so).

"If anyone had told me 30 years ago that I would be playing ragtime and stride piano at this stage of my career, I would have thought they were stark raving mad," Hyman chuckled.

"What people forget is that I played music like Carolina Shout while I was in high school. Mind you, I played Fats Waller's version, so I had to re-learn it years later when I recorded the tune on the James P. Johnson album. But I never stopped playing stride as a novelty."

Carolina Shout was far from Hyman's only exposure to early jazz. His older brother was a pianist with a sizeable collection of 78 rpm records that included Teddy Wilson, Benny Goodman, Bix Beiderbecke, Fats Waller and others.

"I always loved the old records of Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Teddy, Bix, Fats, and the others, and I still do. As a kid, however, I didn't care for a lot of other records we had around because they were pop-oriented rather than jazz. But I became fond of these other records too, as I grew up and began to understand the symbiotic relationship of ragtime, jazz and dance music. I still have the old records and refer to them for a lot of research as well as listening pleasure."

He later met and was influenced by one of the musicians from those early records. In his last year of college, Hyman entered a New York radio station piano contest and so impressed the judges that he won 12 lessons with Teddy Wilson, whose advice to maintain a high level of technique is something that he's never forgotten. That shows in everything Hyman has done since then, from his recordings of Joplin's entire piano works (RCA, CRL1106) to occasional appearances on public television with his Perfect Jazz Repertory Group.

"You might say," said Hyman as he again offered me the energy raisins, "that I'hve had an eclectic background as a piano player."

We both chuckled at that understatement. Hyman has played in so many different musical situations that the envious sometimes refer to him as "the chameleon". He began professional life as a solo pianist in a Harlem bar; he once played with Victor Lombardo (Guy's brother) who couldn't stand piano players who used the pedals; he be-

came involved with radio early in his career and developed a facility on organ on a "sink-or-swim" basis; he was both organist and musical director on the last TV version of **Beat The Clock** and did the silent movie-style improvisations as contestants ran up and down the studio or as they bit their nails; he was musical director from 1959 to 1962 for Arthur Godfrey on both radio and TV; he learned how to conduct and became one of New York's best and busiest arrangers; and, as the recording industry boomed in the early 1950's, everyone in New York knew that a guy called Dick Hyman could play whatever style the occasion demanded. They still do.

When Crazy Otto influenced an entire generation to start playing slightly out-of-tune honky-tonk, Hyman's lightning technique fitted right in — although anonymously.

You may not realize it, but you heard him on record under various pseudonyms that seem quite out of character with today's scholarly Hyman: Knuckles O'Toole, Puddin' Head Smith, Willie "The Rock" Knox, Rip Chords, and, never to be forgotten, Slugger Ryan. All were Dick Hyman under a different name.

As he became more and more skilled at arranging for different types of musical groups, Hyman cultivated a skill he'd always had transcribing music — particularly solos — right off old records. (It served him first when he played clarinet as a youngster and learned the solos off his brother's old 78 records)

Unlike most musicians in the bebop era, Hyman had taken the trouble early in his career to read books like Panassie's **Le Jazz Hot**, **Jazzmen**, and **The Real Jazz**. He knew, therefore, the historical significance of ragtime and jazz. And his skill for transcription made it possible for him to "get inside" the early music in a way that few could.

Hyman once described his love affair with transcribing old music for a **Contemporary Keyboard** interviewer: "If I take something off a record, I really begin to live that record and understand it and feel what's going on as much as possible. You really begin to become a part of the record if you do it right. You have to do it element by element. It's a marvelous way of studying. I would recommend it for anybody, just as a way of learning the music. It is difficult on the old recordings because the sound is very poor. Very often there are places where you just can't hear anything, and you have to use some kind of educated guessing. But your ear gets very keen if you isolate the elements.

"First I transcribe the main elements, who's got the ball so to speak, and then I fill in the respective sections and then listen very carefully to the other things. Every time you go through it for a different element, you correct a previous one. You have thought the saxophones were doing one thing but when you hear the trumpets, you realize the saxophones were doing something else. With a smaller band, the counterpoint will become clear if you just concentrate."

It seemed only natural, given that skill, that Hyman was asked to join the New York Jazz Repertory Company in the 1960's. And Richard Roven Hyman, who had played just about every school of piano that exists, began delving back into his own roots — all the way back to ragtime.

So successful was Hyman in transcribing old Armstrong solos for three trumpets that the group was asked to re-create that concert in a 1975 tour across the Soviet Union. They played not in concert halls but in sports arenas because of the crowds. (In Moscow alone, they played eight concerts in a sports arena that held nine thousand!)

Just before the latest ragtime revival got underway, Hyman felt an urge to go back to his first love: solo piano. He accepted an offer to play Sunday evenings in The Cookery, a jazz eatery in Greenwich Village, and the cycle of rediscovering his roots was almost complete. The bebop pianist who had started off in Harlem, and who was Birdland's first house pianist, now

found that people were requesting the stride piano pieces that he had played for decades as novelty. They also began requesting Jelly Roll Morton and ragtime. Especially ragtime.

"I think we have to credit Joshua Rifkin — no doubt about it. He showed us that there was a style of music that was worth re-creating," said Hyman, who knew only two or three ragtime pieces at that time.

"A few years back," I said, "Dave Flowitt, one of Toronto's very best stride pianists, heard you play Joplin's Solace and reported that you seem to have some sort of gift for getting right inside a tune when you play it. Do you agree?"

"He's certainly right about Solace. I love that tune. But when I'm playing ragtime concerts I also like to extemporize on the melodies. I like to think that I follow the spirit of the way that Joplin originally wrote them."

So identified did Hyman become with ragtime and Joplin in the early 1970's that he was a natural choice to score the music and play the piano for the movie, Joplin, which starred Billy D. Williams. If you saw it, you were probably unaware of the problems that Hyman had to overcome in marrying the music to what the audience saw the actors doing on the screen.

In one crucial scene, the audience saw Billy D. Williams's fingers moving on the keyboard. What they didn't know was that the actor couldn't play piano. Hyman had to look at the film frame by frame and figure out something that made musical sense — no easy trick when the fingers weren't following any pattern or any recognizable melody. The movie was never a box-office hit, but it's worth watching on late television to hear Hyman's off-camera performances and his virtuoso adjustment to whatever the actors were doing.

Where will Hyman's talents lead him next?

"I've got to find more time for composing. That's the direction I'd like to go — if I can only find the time." That, of course, is easier said than done when one is a six or seven-day-a-week workaholic like Hyman. But Hyman already has a major ragtime work scored for symphony (it's unrecorded but was performed by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra) and has a busy mind full of other projects.

The future, hopefully, holds more records like those in which he has re-created Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Scott Joplin and Fats Waller. His latest, still to be released during my visit, was an LP in which Hyman played Hog Maw Stomp, Messin's Around With The Blues and other tunes that Waller recorded at the beginning of his career. The instrument was an organ which Waller was supposed to have played in Cincinnati. I listened to a tape and would have sworn I was listening to Waller.

As I left the Manhattan studio I thought about Dick Hyman's version of Caprice Rag, waiting for me back home in Toronto, and vowed to do two things before I tackled it again. First, I had to find out where Hyman buys his raisins. Secondly, I had to buy a year's supply. After all, look what they'd done for him . . .

FOOTNOTE: Some time ago Dick Hyman became so frustrated about friends not being able to find his recordings that he bought back a stock of them from several recording companies and created his own distributing company. He will send you a list of what's available if you write to Eastlake Music, Inc., 30 Lincoln Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10023. I'd heartily recommend The Nostalgia Years in which he faithfully recreates Nola, Dizzy Fingers and other solo novelty piano pieces that are probably in your piano bench.

EDITOR: We hasten to correct an error. At least three pianists have recorded the full works of Scott Joplin -- Dick Hyman, Dick Zimmerman and Joshua Rifkin.

RAGTIME HOT LINE

This note came from Ragtime Society member Willie Wilson who played banjo at last year's Ragtime Bash with his group, the Rainbow Gardens Orchestra. He writes: "Is there a Toronto area member interested in playing piano with our little band? We don't actually play ragtime at present -- not that we couldn't or wouldn't. We play mostly the music of the 1920's and 30's, focussing on the style and sound of Bix Beiderbecke and his contemporaries. We don't make a lot of money but we have a lot of fun. Must be able to read a little, fake a little, and willing to buy a tuxedo. Call me at 252-8361 for more information." (EDITOR: We welcome brief communications like the above. After all, it's YOUR publication)

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(Friday night, Saturday and Sunday)

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Jasen talks about Joplin:

"Great- but a terrible piano player!"

Last spring, listeners to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Cross-Canada radio program "Sunday Morning" heard a fascinating 10-minute interview with David Jasen, no stranger to the annual ragtime bash and probably this continent's best-known ragtime historian. Here's a transcript of that interview.

ANNOUNCER: In 1974, one of the hit movies of the season was The Sting starring Paul Newman and Robert Redford. As well as being a box office smash, the film also launched a revival of an almost forgotten American musical form--ragtime. The sound track of the film was full of Scott Joplin rags, those infectious syncopated piano pieces from the turn of the century. The popular revival of ragtime has also sparked interest about its origins. Here's Sunday Morning's Russ Patrick in New York.

PATRICK: The man who's been leading the search into ragtime's roots is David Jasen. He's assembled in his Long Island home the world's largest private collection of ragtime sheet music, piano rolls and recordings. Crates of research on ragtime clutter his living room, dining room, den--even his garage. One of the first questions David Jasen tackled in his 25-year-long search into ragtime and its history was where the word "ragtime" actually came from.

JASEN: The word "ragtime" was originally spelled RAG (hyphen) TIME and I take that to mean a contraction of "ragged time". That makes a lot of sense in describing a music that was thoroughly syncopated, off rhythm with the ragged time. It's off the beat, not on the beat, and continuously so through the whole thing, taking an average of about two minutes in its usual form.

PATRICK: Why, David, do you think that ragtime as a musical idiom was ignored for so long?

JASEN: Well, obviously it was because of the social milieu in which it happened, and that was the milieu of the whorehouse, the $5 house, I might add, and the larger saloons. This is clearly music of the sub-strata of society, and it wasn't until the 1970's that ragtime was finally accepted as a proper music and put in its proper setting.

PATRICK: You devote a whole chapter in your book to Scott Joplin. You call him the King of the Ragtime Writers.

JASEN: Yes, because if we look at all his work, not just one tune like Maple Leaf Rag, although God knows he could stand on that one tune alone, but at his 42 rags as the work of a lifetime, there is an amazing growth and development that is unparalleled by anybody else's contribution.

PATRICK: Was he a good piano player?

JASEN: He was a terrible piano player. He was such a bad piano player that he never played in those $5 whorehouses that I originally talked about. He couldn't get in. He had to play in a saloon, and it wasn't even a saloon. He played in the second floor of a bar that was informally called the Maple Leaf Club, and that's where he got the name for Maple Leaf Rag in honour of the club. But he wasn't good enough to play downstairs in the main saloon.

PATRICK: If there's one piece of music that gets more attention in your book than any other one, it has to be Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag, from 1899. Why is that so important?

JASEN: For a number of reasons. The best reason is because it's so great. It really is the flagship, the granddaddy of all rags, not that it was the first which it wasn't by a long shot. But it was the first to give ragtime a stature, to establish ragtime as a genre. It was the first million selling success. It was the most imitated rag. Pianists would go from place to place and pick up this little theme and that little theme and hear another piano player, and not only because they didn't finger so good, as Jelly Roll once said, but also because they didn't hear so good, they would interpret it in their way, always losing something. In that way, they created their own monstrous piece that was their own pride and joy, taken from all sorts of sources around them. The Maple Leaf Rag was the first, or among the first rags, not to do this and to have a unified feeling of the three or four sections having an inter-relationship. This is a conscious composition, rather than just a bunch of improvisations in syncopation.

PATRICK: You also talk in the book about the fact that blacks and whites alike, even though they may have had nothing else in common at all, did have this music in common.

JASEN: Oh yes. It's very interesting. You get a lot of people who want to claim it as a white music exclusively, and then you get some blacks who say, "Hey, this is our music." But, in fact, it was both. It was the music of the poor people. We didn't have in this country segregation of the races until you hit the middle class.

PATRICK: Why did ragtime--or, at least, the early stages of ragtime--why did it die after 1917 or after the First World War?

JASEN: Well, because we were changing. Our whole lifestyles were changing. Why did popular music change? After World War I, we had far more frenetic (music). The Charleston represents the epitome or highlight of the 20's, but there was no corresponding dance before World War I. You had waltzes, ballads, your two-steps, polkas and schottisches but nothing as striking or as syncopated (as Charleston). That's what ragtime finally did, you see. It sort of incorporated itself into the mainstream--and ragtime lives as the result of it.

PATRICK: What is your opinion, David Jasen, of the "ragtime song", things like Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home? and, of course, Irving Berlin's Alexander Ragtime Band?

JASEN: I love 'em--as songs. As pop songs. I absolutely can't stand the notion that they have anything to do with ragtime. They don't. Plain and simple, they're pop songs. They've got lovely melodies, they've got charming harmony, the're delightful. But they're not ragtime at all.

PATRICK: Something that strikes me when I read all those profiles you have of those early people is how many died young.

JASEN: Yes. They thought they could drink up the world, and this was all before Prohibition. It was a very demanding life. You were constantly on the go, and you were constantly as a ragtime pianist proving yourself.

And of course the atmosphere itself was a great contributor. It was just like being a kid in a candy store without your mommy. There were no restraints. And these weren't mature adults. These were adolescent types, and certainly they were adolescents when they started. They just never grew up, and they didn't get a chance to because they died awfully young.

PATRICK: Do you think ragtime is going to be with us for awhile? Or do you think that the 1974 Sting-inspired revival has pretty well seen its day?

JASEN: Well, the revival may have seen its day. But I think what the revival did do in fact was to ensure that ragtime will remain as part of our American musical heritage, and it will never die. It can't die. It's too good a music. Now, more people know that and they revel in it.

PATRICK: David Jasen is not just the world's foremost expert on the history of ragtime. He's also a composer of ragtime music. Several of his works have been recorded on the Folkways label. David Jasen is a determined man, determined not to let ragtime slip back to what it was before The Sting in 1974, an important musical idiom almost forgotten.

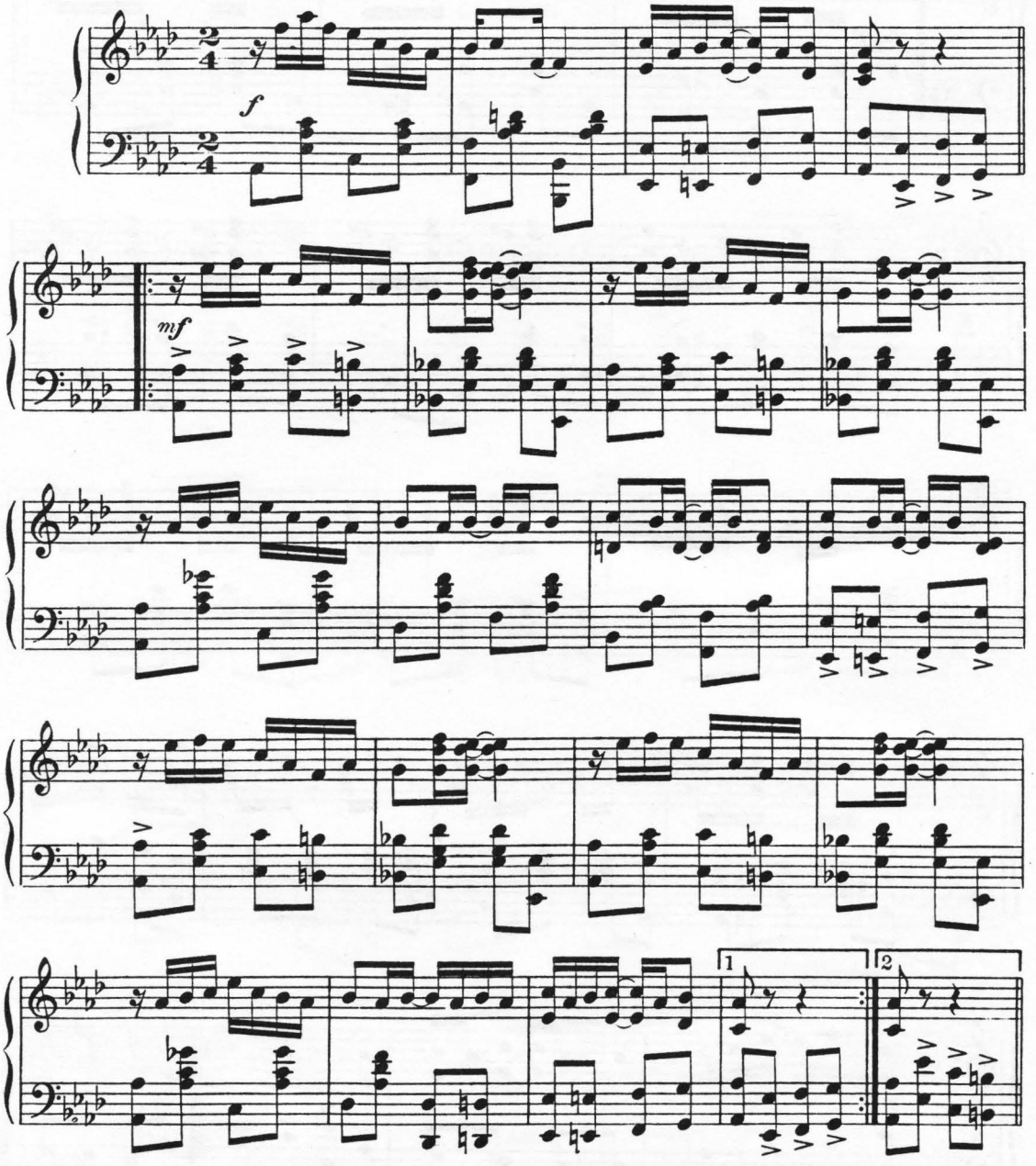
ANNOUNCER: David Jasen has written the definitive history of ragtime. It's called Rags to Ragtime .

Footnote: The interview was transcribed off tape by Toronto ragtimer Jack Hutton who apologizes to David Jasen for any errors caused by his editing. We thank Hugh Clairmont, Gravenhurst jazz musician and columnist, who suggested the interview's publication in the Ragtimer.

Thanks, Editor John!

Several years ago, John Fairhead turned on his TV set at his Toronto home and caught an interview in which Ragtime Bob Darch described something called the Ragtime Society. John phoned the station for more details and has been deeply involved in the Society ever since, most recently serving as the Ragtimer's editor. Our favorite anecdote about John is how he got his first dance band job. When he knew he would have to audition, he put coins on the keyboard of his player piano, watched which ones went up and down and learned the tune that way. His "teacher" was Lawrence (Piano Roll)Cook.

VIVACITY RAG.

FRANK C. KEITHLEY.

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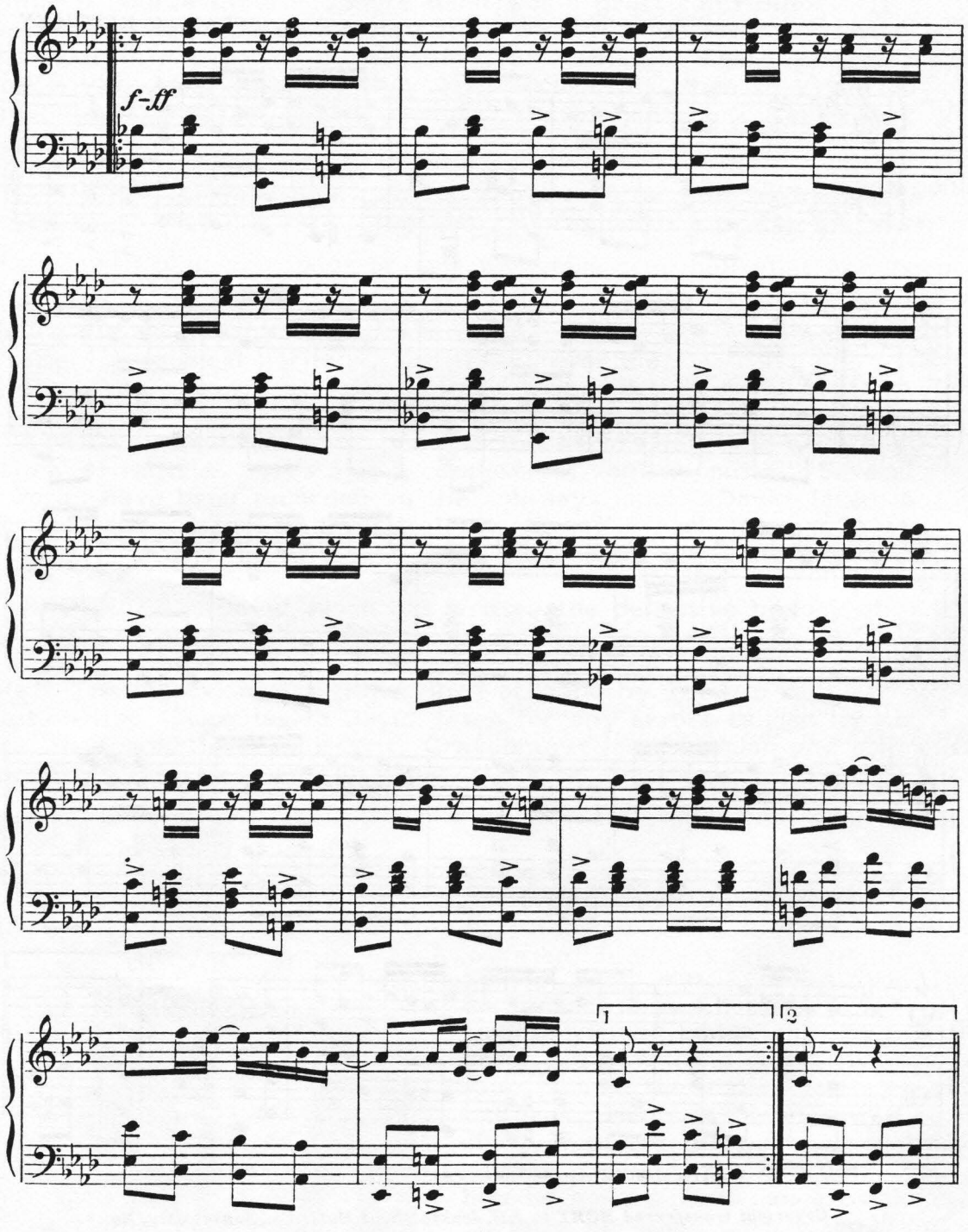
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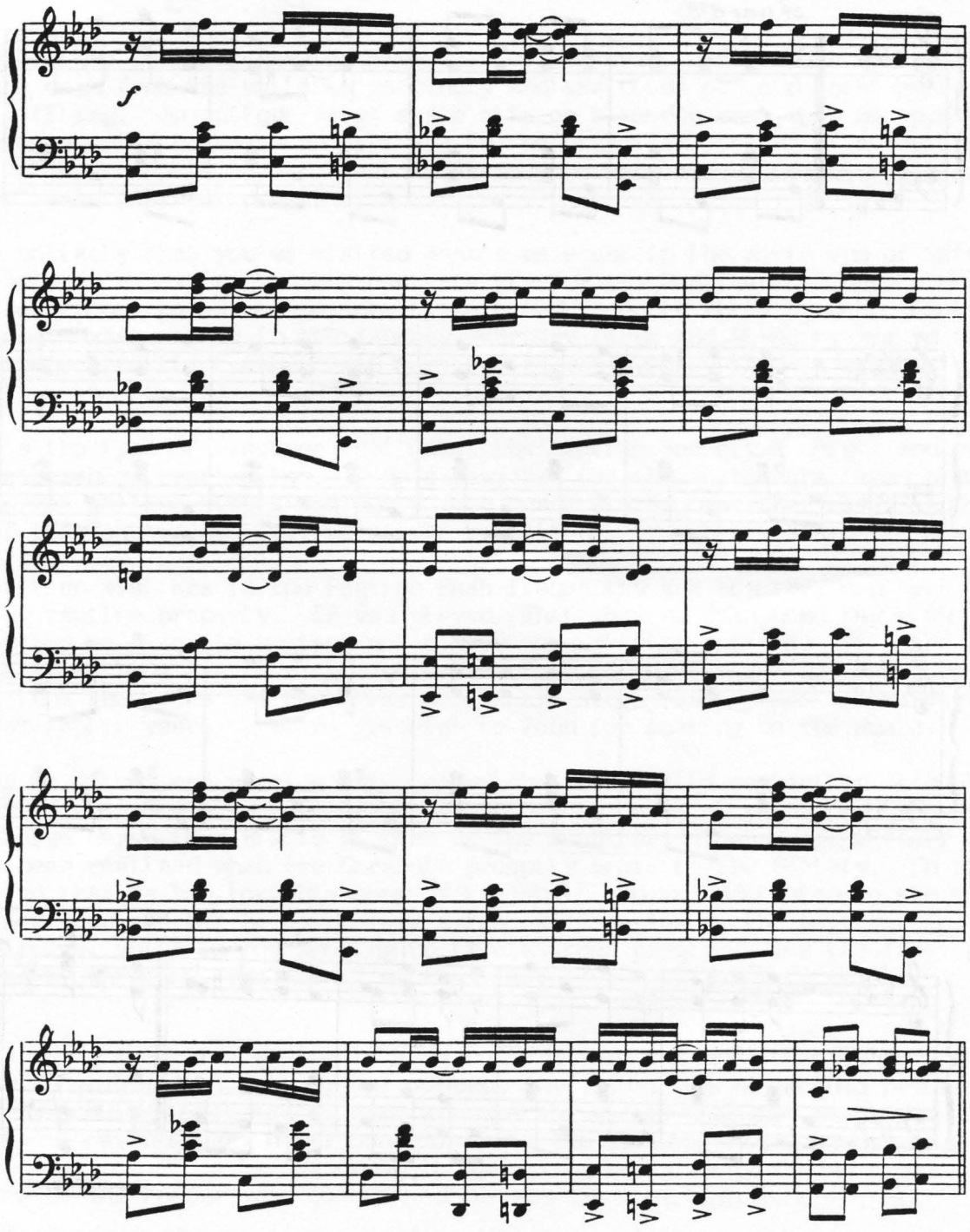
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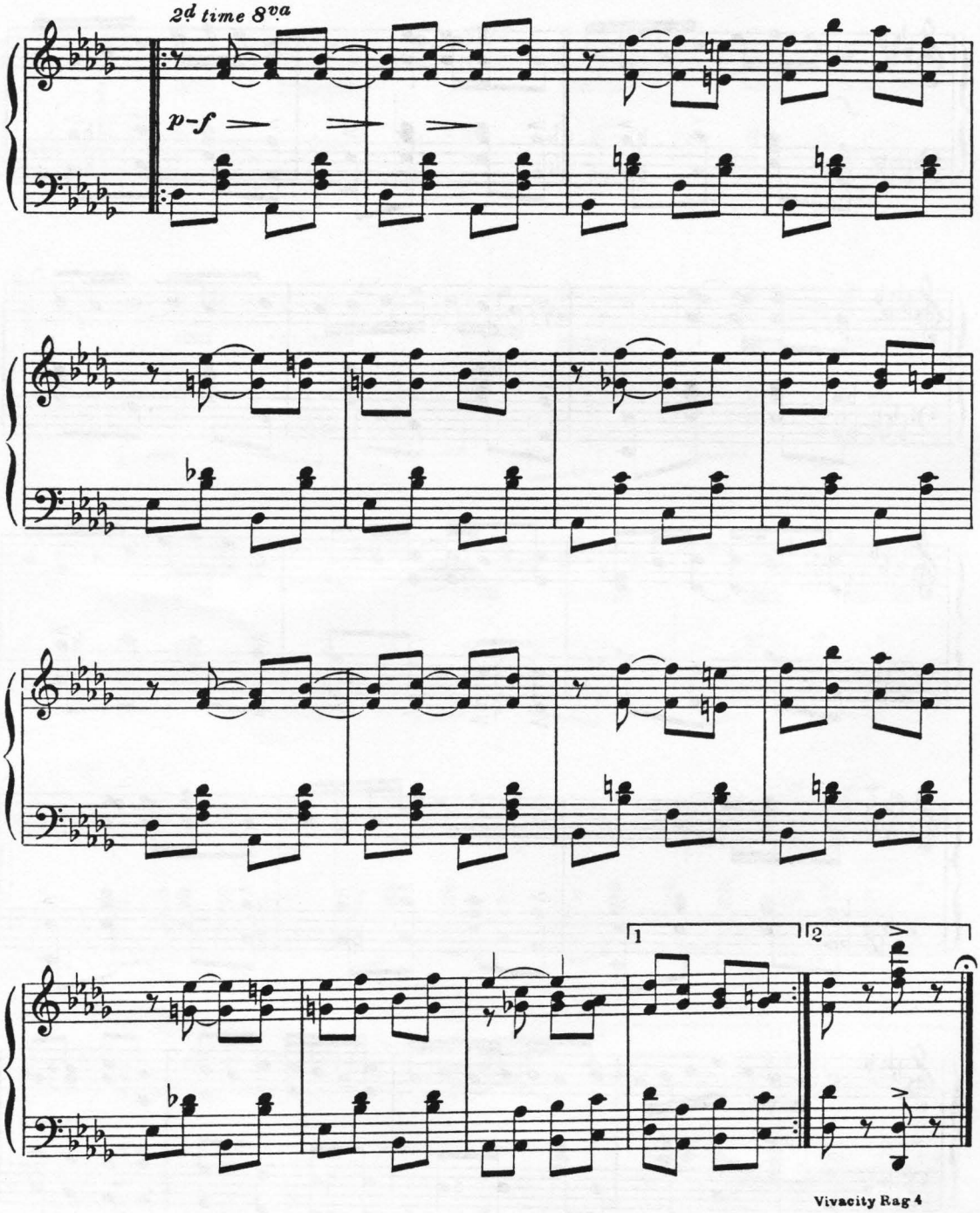
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John Arpin's basement has to be seen to be believed. Rare sheet music covers look down from the walls at seemingly endless piles of old sheet music that await filing. An antique weigh scale sits on a wooden desk with no apparent purpose, but somehow it seems appropriate in the organized clutter of a ragtime collector's den. Joplin, Scott, Lamb -- all around you is evidence of their music and almost their physical presence.

It's unlikely that you've visited John's basement in the north end of Metropolitan Toronto, but you're exposed to its contents through the Ragtimer . The old music that you see in our pages was personally selected from his files by John, including That Mbaning Saxaphone Rag in the January-February issue and Vivacity Rag in this issue. Try to find it elsewhere and you'll discover quickly that it simply isn't available.

That's the type of resource that makes the Ragtime Society a unique and rather special membership organization. John's searches for old music have taken him into out-of-the-way antique stores and dusty old music stores over the years. And, as members of the Ragtime Society, we're all benefiting from his research.

First-time visitors to the Ragtime Bash frequently ask how they can tell if they are playing ragtime properly. If you played That Mbaning Saxaphone Rag with full attention paid to the written notes, you were playing ragtime. It's the sort of piece that a neophyte ragtimer can master easily, and yet it is a couple of levels above the junk that some Tin Pan Alley publishers attempted to pass off as ragtime in the post-Joplin years. We're grateful to John for loaning us the music.

Every so often, one worries about copyright problems in connection with old music. John and the other Society directors had that concern several years back when they carried George Gershwin's Rialto Ripples in the Ragtimer. They thought their worst fears had been realized when Ira Gershwin promptly wrote to the Society. On the contrary, Ira reported that he had lost his copy of the music and was delighted to see it. In fact, he wondered whether he could have a few extra copies of the Ragtimer ! (Rialto Ripples, which is now showing up in classical programs, was the first published composition by Gershwin, who was 17 at the time)

Continuing the rare ragtime in each issue is just one way that we're trying to improve your publication. If you've noticed, the issues are now being printed in a mini-magazine format rather than as separate sheets that can be lost easily. We had mixed reactions on three-hole punching the January-February issue so will await your comments before doing it again (comments ranged from great enthusiasm to one reader who complained he was back in high school)

Another minor change is the Ragtime Hot Line. If you want to contact other ragtimers in search of old music, piano rolls or with information that you want to share, drop us a line. Keep it brief and to the point, and we'll be pleased to run it in the next issue. After all, it's your publication.

Jack Hatton

Vivacity Rag

By
Frank C. Keithley

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